

XII.—On a New Genus of African Birds.

By GUSTAV HARTLAUB, M.D., For. Mem. Z.S., &c.

(Plate VI.)

PHLEXIS, gen. nov.

CHAR. GENER.:—

Rostrum rectum, mediocre, emarginatum, gracile, subulatum, apicem versus compressum, valde carinatum, gonyde dimidio apicali adscendente; setis rictalibus vix ullis; naribus in fossa majore positis, operculo magno fere clausis.

Alæ breves, caudæ basin vix superantes, fornicatæ, debiles, truncato-rotundatæ, remige primo minimo, quarto et quinto subæqualibus omnium longissimis.

Cauda elongata, valde gradata, mollis; rectricibus latiusculis, scapis parum rigidis, pogoniis mollibus, subpellucidis, quatuor intermediis æquilongis.

Pedes satis robusti, tarsi antice scutellatis, digitis externis et internis æquilongis.

Ptilosis mollis, laxa; plumis tergi, uropygii et hypochondriorum valde elongatis.

PHLEXIS LAYARDI, sp. nov. (Plate VI.)

Supra olivaceo-fusca, cauda subrufescente; subtus fulvo-ferruginea; abdomine pallidiore, in colorem isabellinum vergente; regione parotica conspicue cinerascens; hypochondriis dorsi colore adumbratis; loris subrufescentibus; rostro nigricante, mandibula ad basin pallida; pedibus dilute brunneis.

Long. tot. 5'' 10''', rostri a fronte 5''', alæ 2'' 2''', caudæ 2'' 9''', tarsi 9'''.

Hab. Natal (E. L. Layard). *George (424)*

The type of this very interesting and well-defined new African form is *Bradypterus victorini* of Sundevall (Zoolog. Anteckn. Victorin. p. 29)*, a rare and little-known bird, which has hardly anything to do with the genus *Bradypterus* of Swainson, this latter having been originally formed for the "Pavaneur" of Levaillant† (*Sylvia brachyptera*, Vieillot).

✓ * [Cf. Ibis, 1861, p. 203.—Ed.]

† The true "Pavaneur" of Levaillant being unknown to me, I wrote for the specimen in the Berlin Museum, which Cabanis (Mus. Hein. i. p. 43) considers to belong to Levaillant's species, and which, judging from his description, must be a female. This I have examined most minutely, and have arrived at the following results:—The "Pavaneur"

✓ On the other hand *Bradypterus sylvaticus* of Sundevall (*op. cit.*) seems to be a typical species of that genus; but the *B. brevirostris* of the same author is nothing but *Catriscus apicalis* of Cabanis. The genus has been thrown into further confusion by Lesson, who states, "l'Afrique nourrit trois Bradypptères, le Pavaneur, le Coryphée et le Grivelin de Levaillant"! and whose *Bradypterus ruficoccyx* (Descr. Mammif. et Ois. p. 293) has "la queue fourchue"!!

What finally separates our new genus *Phlexis* from the *Calamodytae*, and more especially from the genus *Bradypterus*, is the great comparative length of the strongly graduated tail, the very concave and very weak wings, the scutellated tarsi, and the whole structure of the plumage. The great development of the under tail-coverts in *Bradypterus*, and their still more wonderful development in *Catriscus*, is entirely wanting in *Phlexis*. The generic position of this last is with the *Malurinae*; it stands between *Drymæca* and *Sphenæacus*, and shows a very remarkable affinity to the Australian form *Drymodes*.

I should add that the form of the bill is very similar in *Bradypterus* and *Phlexis*, but that it is more slender and more compressed in the former, and that they differ very considerably in the structure of the nostrils.

The two known species of the genus *Phlexis* are therefore—

(1). *P. victorini* (Sundevall).

(2). *P. layardi*, Hartlaub.

of the Berlin Museum and of Cabanis (probably also of Levaillant) is neither a *Cettia*, as supposed by Cabanis, nor does it belong to my new genus *Phlexis*; but it comes nearer to the latter, from which, however, it differs in its less slender and less subulate bill, in the structure of the nostrils, in its longer, stronger, and less concave wings, in its much less graduated tail, and, finally, in its longer and stronger tarsi and feet. The plumage of the sides and back is also much longer, fuller, and softer in *Phlexis*. In fact the "Pavaneur" is generically distinct from this last as well as from *Cettia*, and stands in some respects intermediate between them. Neither *Phlexis* nor the "Pavaneur" show the curious development of the under tail-coverts, which is very apparent in *Cettia*, and still more so in the nearly allied form *Catriscus*. I abstain from applying a new generic name to the "Pavaneur," but fear that it will ultimately be necessary that this be done.



© Finsch del.
J Wolf lith.

M & N Hanhart imp.

PHILEXIS LAYARDI.